



CANADIAN CENTRE FOR
ELDER LAW

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Media Release

New report on health care treatment decision-making for people living with dementia in British Columbia

For immediate release

Vancouver, 27 February 2019—The Canadian Centre for Elder Law (CCEL) and the Alzheimer Society of B.C. released a report today titled *Conversations about Care: The Law and Practice of Health Care Consent for People Living with Dementia in British Columbia*. The report, which reflects over two years of research and consultation, makes recommendations for changes to law, policy and practice that will result in better respect for the health care decision-making rights of people living with dementia and their families.

The report contains 34 recommendations that address law reform, access to justice and legal aid, public and health care professional legal education, and systemic barriers to informed consent, such as physician-billing and access to language interpretation. The recommendations were developed with a 15-person inter-disciplinary advisory committee after consulting with people living dementia, family caregivers, health care professionals, and other key stakeholders from across BC.

“Many seniors, including adults living in long-term care, have the mental capacity to make their own health care decisions, or participate in health care decision-making,” says Isobel Mackenzie, Seniors Advocate. “Respect for this right is extremely important.”

“Informed health care decision-making requires meaningful conversations about what matters most to people, and what options they have,” says CCEL National Director Krista James. “Unfortunately, physicians and other health care staff sometimes do not get informed consent when they should, particularly in long-term care. This report provides the province with a road map for how the Government of British Columbia, health regulators, the provincial health authorities and others can work toward more robust legal rights and better support for people living with dementia in this province.”

“This project has brought together the perspectives of health care providers and people affected by dementia to champion their voices and help us better understand the legal rights of people living with dementia,” says Alzheimer Society of B.C. CEO Maria Howard.

“The report will allow families, care providers, government and communities to collaborate as they support people affected by dementia to live the best lives possible.”

The full report, as well as a short plain language version of the report, can be downloaded from the CCEL website.

About the CCEL

The CCEL carries out scholarly research, writing, analysis, and community engagement relating to legal and policy issues that impact us as we age. As part of its work the CCEL consults with stakeholders, collaborates with community agencies, and publishes legal, policy and practice resources, including recommendations for law reform, and public information materials. The CCEL is a division of the BC Law Institute, BC’s non-profit independent law reform agency.

About the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

Families across British Columbia are affected by Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias. The Society vision is a world without Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, and that world begins with a more dementia-friendly society, where people affected by dementia are acknowledged, supported and included. Working in communities throughout the province, the Society supports, educates and advocates for people with dementia, as well as enabling research into the disease. As part of a national federation, the Society is a leading authority on the disease in Canada.



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